

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY: NEA/EGABCNGTON:MAR

APPROVED BY: NEA/EGABINGTON

S/S:MR ORTIZ

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O 052151Z MAY 76 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 109746

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 3978 ACTION SECSTATE 04 MAY

QUOTE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3978

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PRIMIN RACHID KARAME

1. SAY PRIMIN KARAME MORNING OF MAY 4 . HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, FORMER
MINISTER MALEK SALAM, WAS PRESENT.

2. STARTED OFF BY NOTING THAT SHOOTING HAD INCREASED IN INTENSITY
AND
THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR IT TO STOP, PARTICULARLY THE HEAVY ARTILLERY

BEING FIRED AT RANDOM. ASKED WHAT THE CEASEFIRE COMMISSION WAS

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DOING TO CONTROL IT (KARAME HEADS THE COMMISSION). KARAME REPLIED

THAT HE IS DOING HIS BEST BUT THAT HE HAS NO MEANS OF ENFORCING THE CEASEFIRE. HE EXPRESSED FEAR THAT SITUATION COULD CAUSE DELAY IN THE ELECTIONS.

3. I POINTED OUT THAT THE WORLD IN GENERAL WAS BECOMING DISENCHANTED WITH THE SITUATION. THERE WAS THE DANGER THAT COUNTRIES WOULD TURN THEIR BACKS ON LEBANON. INFORMED HIM, HOWEVER, THAT OUR INTEREST IN LEBANON STILL CONTINUED. I HAD SEEN PRESIDENT FORD DURING MY TRIP TO WASHINGTON. PRESIDENT FORD IS FULLY BRIEFED ON WHAT IS GOING ON AND HE EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN. HE HAD TAKEN STEPS TO ELIMINATE DELAYS IN THE GOVERNMENTAL PROCESS FOR ASSISTANCE TO LEBANON ONCE ORDER WAS RESTORED AND A NEW PRESIDENT ELECTED. BUT ORDER CAME FIRST.

4. IN ANSWER TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION, I STRESSED THAT I HAD NOT COME BACK WITH ANY SPECIFIC PLAN. I WAS MERELY SEEKING THE ADVICE AND VIEWS OF THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES AND I WAS URGING THAT THERE BE NO FURTHER DELAY IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. NOTING THAT I WAS SEEING JUMBLATT, I ASKED KARAME WHAT I SHOULD SAY TO HIM. KARAME WAS LESS BITTER THAN I ANTICIPATED INASMUCH AS THE TWO ARE NOW AT LOGGERHEADS. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT, EVEN ON JUMBLATT'S SIDE, THERE WERE "FOREIGN ELEMENTS" THAT HE DID NOT CONTROL. THIS MADE KEEPING THE CEASEFIRE DIFFICULT. IT ALSO MADE CONTROLLING THE SHIPMENT OF ARMS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE. ON THE OTHER HAND, KARAME ASKED HOW SECURITY COULD BE MAINTAINED UNDER THE JUMBLATT THESIS THAT THERE SHOULD BE "INTERNATIONALIZATION", NO "ARABIZATION" OR NO "SYRIANIZATION" OF THE CRISIS. I URGED HIM TO BE TOUGHER DURING NEXT MEETING OF JOINT COMMISSION AND TO DEMAND TERMINATION OF SHELLING.

5. I NOTED IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT FRIENDLY COUNTRIES IN THE AREA WERE TRYING TO USE THEIR GOOD OFFICES TO SOLVE THE CRISIS. I ADDED THAT I UNDERSTOOD ALSO THAT ARAFAT WAS GOING TO DAMASCUS. AT THIS POINT, MALEK SALAM SAID THAT, IF ARAFAT WAS GOING TO DAMASCUS, HE HAD NOT DEPARTED SO FAR. INDEED ARAFAT HAD CALLED HIM AND WANTED TO SEE HIM IN ANOTHER HOUR.

6. MENTION OF ARAFAT GAVE KARAME THE OPPORTUNITY ONCE MORE TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF A DIRECT AMERICAN CONTACT WITH ARAFAT. IF THERE WAS A DIRECT AMERICAN CONTACT WITH ARAFAT, ARAFAT WOULD
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BE MUCH LESS ON THE DEFENSIVE AND WOULD BE MORE WILLING TO MAKE A GREATER EFFORT AIMED AT SOLVING THE LEBANESE CRISIS. MOREOVER, IF THE CHRISTIAN SIDE KNEW THAT THE AMERICANS HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH ARAFAT, THEN THE CHRISTIANS WOULD BE MUCH LESS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SOLVING THE LEBANESE CRISIS AND THEREFORE MUCH MORE FORTHCOMING WITH RESPECT TO NECESSARY CONCESSIONS. I REPEATED MY INSTRUCTIONS VIS A VIS ARAFAT AND SAID THAT HE, KARAME, THROUGH MALEK SALAM SHOULD PRESS

FOR HONORING OF CEASEFIRE BY ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING THOSE WHO
GET SUPPLIES THROUGH PLO.
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